Within the Sacred Precincts of Diplomacy

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This is the third of several stories by Mr. Schreiner, based on his experiences as an Associated Press correspondent. The fourth will appear in an early issue.

MUCH has been said recently anent *secret* diplomacy. The phrase was one of the red herrings of the war, because within itself it has no meaning at all. There is no *secret* diplomacy, because all diplomacy is secret.

The fact that Mr. Wilson is the discoverer of *secret* diplomacy does not necessarily mean that there is such a thing. The dust that was raised from the pages of history was merely an excursion into the perfectly obvious—a trip to the diplomatic Coney Island with a description of some chute-the-chute resulting therefrom.

This preamble should be kept in mind, because it will contribute much toward the understanding of what is to follow.

The great noise concerning *secret* diplomacy was a beating of the war tom-tom. To the pretexts for war that were fashioned it was the engineer's drawing; just a fine diagram on paper that had no meaning to those who drew it. The member of government who will prate of secret diplomacy is either dishonest or does not know what he is talking about. As said before, there is diplomacy, but no *secret* diplomacy, because diplomacy and secrecy are one and the same thing, immutable and indivisible—a Zoroastrian god.

Must "Educate" the People

WE ARE still looking for the government that has the habit of giving to the press any of its diplomatic correspondence, except when it wants to gain something thereby. The publication of notes, treaties, and such, by governments is invariably based on questionable intent. The government has either worked itself into a position where it must step before the public to cover up its tracks, or it has become necessary to prepare the governed for the ultimate—war. When a government starts to publish notes and treaties the ultimatum is not far off.

The logic of this is very simple. Not even a czarist government can afford to break into print with the ultimatum itself. For years the dear public has had of its international relations only the inkling which enterprising journalists have given.

Even the strongest jingo might faint did he read at the breakfast table that the government had gone to war over night—without the consent of the people! That would be too sudden. It would be foolish, because the public must be prepared to make the sacrifices in blood and treasure which the war will call for.

Before a government can go to war, it must *educate* the governed. That takes some time, naturally, and it takes suitable means. The archives of the foreign office are consulted and everything favorable is given to the press. The waking and intensification of race and political prejudices has become necessary. The latent passions of the beast in man must be fanned into soul-searing hatreds. The wrath of the many must be mobilized.

To dumbfound the public would not be the proper method. So the governed are taken into the confidence of the government. The *news* given out is in itself *a fait accompli*. As yet the fact of war may not be accomplished, but the design of it is achieved.

The day is near when the national head will appear in parliament or congress, to proclaim, with tragic mien, and sorrow-riven voice, that the nation is confronted with the dire necessity of having to fight for its existence. All nations going to war hear that same set speech. It is an old formula. Rameses II used it 1279 before Christ, and there is reason to believe that it will be used until diplomacy has become a mere wraith in history.

Other Side's Diplomacy Secret

SPELLBOUND parliament listens and, when the big man allows his hands to fall to his sides, rises to vote war credits and exculpate the government from all evil intent. Recent experiences are too fresh in the mind of the public to make it necessary to draw attention to what happens after that.

We then hear a great deal of the *secret* diplomacy of the adversary. The public does not stop to think that hitherto it was no partner in the international affairs of the country. Though the foreign office dig up documents years old, showing that there were crises and crises, it will not explain how it came that these difficulties were not aired at the time. Also at that moment the parliament has slapped on most efficacious War Acts, and questioning of the government after that is equivalent to high treason.

Reference has been made to diplomatic privileges. Some of them are no longer important. That the premises of the embassy and legation be placed under the fiction of exterritoriality is a mere courtesy these days, though still liable to abuse, as has been in the case of Mr. Lewis Einstein. The inviolability of the person of a diplomatist and his staff is a humane provision, and should be held in better esteem than the Entente and United States governments have recently done, though the modification should be made that the diplomatist is answerable for his conduct to the criminal law of the country in which he is stationed so that he may be reached in case he seduces the young females of the foreign community. To do that would be a step forward. As it is the diplomatist can not be held responsible for this and other acts, because the foreign government can not punish him, and his own government will not punish, because it can not admit that it had such an individual in its foreign service. All that happens is that the man is dismissed. As an example, it should be mentioned that Mr. Gerard, while in Berlin, threatened a man with arson. The man made a complaint in the courts, but the foreign office asked him not to press the case, because nothing more than diplomatic correspondence could come of it in the end. The foreign office could have given that advice a little sooner, and perhaps gained the eternal gratitude of Mr. Gerard, but it had an interest in parading this great diplomatist in all his splendor of intellect. That was the reason why the court took notice of the complaint in any form.

To diplomatic privilege belongs exemption from taxation, custom duties, inviolability of baggage and parcels delivered through the mail, and a few other favors not important enough to be named. The great privilege, however, consists in the permission to the diplomatist to use a secret code, and to maintain his own postal service. The function of the diplomatic courier consists of convoying the diplomatic mail pouch, in the recesses of which may be hidden the very secret treaty which later encompasses the ruin of the country through which the courier carries it. In diplomacy that is an everyday occurrence.

Routine dispatches of the diplomatist, especially those for which some private person pays the tolls, are transmitted in what is known as *texte clair*, or plain, legible words. Official communications, however, are first drawn up in text, then they are handed to the code clerk who transcribes the message into code. They are delivered at the telegraph or cable station in that form. Upon arrival the code telegram is turned over to another code clerk, who proceeds to decode it. The "clear text" is then turned over to the official to whom the message is addressed. For "special" and "strictly confidential" instructions there is usually a special code, and very often that is not in the possession of the code clerk, but is held by the ambassador and minister for foreign affairs themselves.

On the Theft of Codes

MANY an interesting piece of fiction has been written about the theft of codes. The fact of the matter is that the possession of a code book means nothing. That sets of five numerals identify sentences and parts of sentences does not justify the conclusion that these sets of numerals have always the same meaning. As a matter of fact they never have the meaning of the words placed in conjunction with them, so far as the cyphers in the telegram are concerned. Governments go no longer to the trouble of stealing one another's code books, because to do that is now no longer profitable. It is the key to the code that determines what the cyphers mean, and since that key may change with each week, or day, even, it would be an utter waste of time to inquire into the matter.

The system is best explained by a demonstration. Let us assume that on a certain day there had arrived at the American embassy at Vienna a cypher cable from the State Department containing the following: "Amembassy, Vienna.

"65743 85472 63219 73241 54578 89765 84327 Ancona 94578 58782 64327 54898 54937 99819 56782 59327 59334 58733."

Assuming that the Austro-Hungarian government had been in possession of a United States diplomatic code, its foreign office could have obtained a copy of the dispatch from the telegraph office, and, setting one of its code clerks busy, it might have had the following garble of words:

65743 should be guarded against in the future
85472 informed me this morning that
63219 situation needs immediate
73241 the minister for foreign affairs said that
54578 has not yet returned
89765 fall of the ministry is near
84327 result of the recent election was
Ancona "'Ancona"
94578 faced by a deficit
58782 departed yesterday for
64327 a rapprochement between
54898 upon his return last
54937 his statements were unclear
99819 Royal government of Siam
56782 will return on
59327 no further steps will be taken until
59334 present situation is not to be considered critical
58733 attitude is hard to understand

From that jumble of terms the ministry of foreign affairs could learn nothing, of course, but the case would be different did it know the key that was to be used in the decodization of the dispatch. The key for that day may be the numeral 1221. The code clerk of the embassy would retire into his office, lock it, if thought necessary, and the first thing he would do would be to subtract from the cyphers in the telegram the factor 1221. The result of this operation would be the following:

67543—66321 *Aides-mémoir.*
85472—84251 "You will inform (the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian government) that
63291—61998 the reply to our note of
73241—71020 November twenty-first
54578—53357 in regard to the
89765—88544 sinking of the
84327—83106 Italian (Royal mail) steamship
Ancona 'Ancona' is
94578—93357 overdue and that an expression by the (Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian government) is
58782—57571 anxiously awaited.
64327—63106 Should the (Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian government) fail to
54898—53677 inform (the government of the United States)
54937—53716 what its attitude is
99819—98598 the government of the United States will
56782—55561 consider itself at liberty to
59327—58106 take such steps as it may deem
59334—58113 necessary for the
58733—57512 protection of its national interests."

The matter within parenthesis would be added by the diplomatic secretary entrusted with putting the finishing touches to the *aides-mémoire*—the ultimatum, for such in effect the document is.

By that time the foreign office would know that an "Ancona" note had arrived. Dispatches addressed to diplomatic posts and their personnel are carefully scrutinized by the government. Should it be deemed better not to have the word "Ancona" appear in the dispatch, then it would be omitted, of course. The code is quite ample, and the cyphers following the key combination of 63 will easily convey two and three letters of the alphabet, in which case "Ancona" might appear as 63924, 63829, with 9-a, 2-n, 4-c, and 8-o.

The Key of the Day

THERE is little danger of a foreign government learning what the key for the day is, since that information is generally in the keeping of a secretary. To make assurance doubly sure, the cyphers of the key may be in the keeping of two persons with the 12 here used quite useless until the 21 has been added to it. The code clerk may have one factor of the combination, and the ambassador the other. At any rate every precaution is exercised not to have an accident occur.

That code is used for the transmission of a note which will come to the attention of the government anyway, may seem useless at first. The question may be asked: What difference does it make that the foreign government learns from its agents in the telegraphic service that a diplomatic note has arrived?

Governments are unanimous in their determination to let the governed know as little as possible of their affairs. The use of cypher can be interpreted into a courtesy, therefore. Again, by sending diplomatic communications in legible text, publics the world over would unnecessarily fall from one spasm of excitement into another, since diplomacy does now and then clear out of the way, without bloodshed, the situations it creates—usually for a definite purpose.

There is a third party involved. Diplomatic communications in *texte clair* could be scrutinized by the governments of the countries of transit. Intrigues of the brand which recently led to the Great War could not be carried on, because the governments could place themselves in possession of the contents of diplomatic dispatches, and, on the other hand, it would be impossible to form combinations of powers that might be needed to trim some international bully. While such alliances could be decided upon at meetings or by diplomatic mail, it would be extremely difficult to make them effective, or keep them alive. Alliances are veritable scraps of paper when not constantly nourished by intrigues that make such understandings necessary. The Franco-Russian-British pact would have died a hundred times had not Messrs. Iswolsky, Sazonoff, Poincaré, Cruppi, Viviani, Nicolson, Grey, Asquith, Benckendorff, Buchanan, Paleologue, Rennel Rodd, Barrerè and scores of others done their best to feed the beast with new crises, and the Triple Alliance would have died the death of a rag doll had it not been that Aehrenthal, Berchtold, Bieberstein, Schoen, Lichnowskyy, Pourtalès, Jagow and Kuehlmann were never slow in demonstrating to one another how badly they would fare if separated.

Withdraw Right, He Urges

IT WAS the diplomatic code telegram that conjured up the great idiocy, and it is a certainty, of course, that it will serve again the same purpose.

What has been said here in favor of the use of code and other secret rigmarole represents the governmental attitude.

After all it really is better that the ambassador should hand in the ultimatum. To have the news of war leak out through the telegraph operator is not to be advised, naturally. To have other governments know that a crisis is on can not be tolerated. Nor would it be well to use the ordinary commercial codes, because they could be deciphered by anybody. We have arrived at an *impasse*, seemingly.

However, where there is a will there is generally a way. There is no valid reason why a government should not have its own code. But the chances for peace would be greater in the future, if governments insisted that no diplomatic dispatches could be forwarded when not put into the code of the government exercising juris-municipal jurisdiction at the sending point. The principle of exterritoriality of diplomatic posts would not be upset thereby. The telegraph office or cable and radio stations are under the sovereignty of the state, and that ought to suffice to meet all arguments. Parliaments can attend to that little matter by passing a law excluding from transmission by telelectric means all dispatches that can not be read by means of the government's non-public code, with incoming dispatches, and messages in transit, excepted.

The diplomatist can then receive instructions from his own government, as seems necessary in this imperfect world of ours, but he could not send electrically what may be his own wrong interpretation of the facts, or, as is only too often the case, a deliberate lie. To be sure, this expedient would not totally eliminate the use of code and cryptograms, but their employment would be too hazardous, and the risk of misunderstanding would be run to such an extent that no sane government would care to resort to that subter-

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